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SUBJECT: ELECTIONS UPDATE: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTS
LEADERS WITH KAMERHE AS PRESIDENT

REF: KINSHASA 1928

1.(U) Summary. The new leadership of the National Assembly was elected on December 28, with Vital Kamerhe chosen as President. Six of the seven senior leadership positions were filled during the first round of elections with absolute majorities, with the seventh to be filled by a second round election on December 29. Although all six first-round choices come from different political parties, they are all members of President Kabila's Alliance for the Presidential Majority (AMP). However, addressing the multi-party support which led to his victory, Kamerhe pledged to "accommodate the opposition." End summary.

¶2. (U) The GDRC's new National Assembly elected its Permanent Bureau on December 28 in a lengthy process that ground on until the early morning hours. The election drew a surprising number of delegates during the lull between the Christmas and New Year's holidays, with 465 of the 500 Assembly delegates present and participating. As expected, PPRD Secretary-General Vital Kamerhe is the new President of the Assembly with 388 votes; his main opposition, Tshiongo Tshibikumbula wa Tumba, also a PPRD member, withdrew in order

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to maintain coalition solidarity.

¶3. (U) Even with Tshiongo's withdrawal, observers called the margin "overwhelming," considering that the AMP can claim only 332 deputies among its majority. Kamerhe acknowledged the broad support which led to his victory, and pledged to accommodate the opposition, stating that "I was also elected by opposition MPs. I have well understood their message and I will make sure that we guarantee the rights and privileges of opposition MPs... we are going to ensure that the National Assembly is the model of the nascent democracy in the country."

¶4. (U) Christophe Lutundula won the position of First Vice President with 338 votes over Mbenza Thubi, who was previously serving as president of the provisional Bureau. Marc Mvuama of Antoine Gizenga's Unified Party of Lumumbaists (PALU) defeated the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC) candidate and former President of the Transitional Assembly Thomas Luhaka for the position of Second Vice President. Katende wa Ndaya of the Forces for Renovation (FR) won the position of Spokesman or "Rapporteur" with 379 votes, while Egide Ngokosso of the Union of Democratic Mobutuists (UDEMO) was elected Deputy Spokesman or "Rapporteur Adjoint" over several MLC candidates.

¶5. (U) For the position of "Questeur" (which manages financial and administrative responsibilities), no candidate

reached an absolute majority, so a second round of voting will be held on December 29. The position of assistant financial/administrative officer or Deputy "Questeur" was won by Brigitte Kalaba Sampwe of the Coalition of Congolese Democrats (CODECO).

¶6. (SBU) Bio notes, Vital Kamerhe: Born in Bukavu, South Kivu, in 1963, Vital Kamerhe is a member of the Mushi tribe. He received his degree in economics from the University of Kinshasa where he worked as a junior lecturer. He worked as Counselor to Prime Minister Faustin Birindwa in 1993, and as Counselor/Chief of Staff for Education Minister Mushobekwa. Laurent Kabila appointed Kamerhe as negotiator during the Lusaka peace process, after which he was appointed Deputy Government Commissioner for MONUC and subsequently Commissioner for MONUC. Kamerhe later became Information Minister as well as Secretary-General of the PPRD. Vital Kamerhe has strong influence with President Joseph Kabila; he is a confidante of the President and speaks with him regularly. He has been credited with contributing to Kabila's electoral success in the Eastern Congo. Kamerhe speaks French, Lingala, Tshiluba, Swahili, and Kikongo. End bio notes.
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